MARVEL

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LGY#183

LANZING
KELLY
WALKER
HOLLINGSWORTH

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

PREVIOUSLY...

The Guardians of the Galaxy were the heroes of outer space. But something happened to them one year ago that left them irrevocably changed.

Now what's left of the Guardians roams an area of space called the Manifold Territories, doing their best to save various societies from the terraforming asteroids known as Grootfall.

The Guardians have tried their best, but nothing survives a Grootfall, and it feels like no one in the 'Fold is willing to talk to them. So how strange, then, that the Spartax Empire has sent an official message to its prince, Peter Quill!

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

IN "HUNT OF THE SPARTAX"

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IN THE CITYWORLDS, WHERE QUILL WAS FROM, IT WAS CALLED *THE GILDED HUNT.*

HIS PA HAD DONE IT EVERY YEAR.

AND NOW HIS SISTER, *VICTORIA*, HAD COME CALLING.

HE HADN'T SEEN HER SINCE THE PROSCENIUM. HE'D GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD AT PRETENDING THE CITYWORLDS DIDN'T EXIST.

HE WAS A MAN OF THE FOLD, THOSE DAYS.

BUT ONE PHRASE ON HER LITTLE SCROLL CAUGHT HIS EYE.

AND JUST KEPT CATCHING TILL HE BROKE.

Peter...

...don't %&$# this up.

QUILL TOLD HIMSELF HE WOULDN'T. THAT HE COULD PLAY A CIVILIZED GENTLEMAN FOR A TIME.

EVEN LEFT HIS POSSE BEHIND, ALL 'CEPT THE BEST HUNTER OF THE BUNCH.

HE TRIED TO REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE THAT MAN, UNTAINTED BY DUST AND SHAME.

HE TRIED TO FEEL THE LONG-DEAD SUN IN HIS HEART.

FOOSH

HEAR YE, FORGOTTEN CORNER OF THE COSMOS! REJOICE...

...FOR I, *CAPTAIN SAGITTAR OF THE FIRST ARCANA,* CLAIM YOU IN HONOR OF THE *GILDED HUNT OF THE SPARTAX!*

PRINCE PETER, WOULD YOU HONOR US BY SETTING FIRST FOOT ON THE HUNTING SOIL?

THE SOIL YOU JUST STERILIZED FROM ORBIT?

IMPRESSIVE, NO? IF IT PROTECTS A SINGLE SPARTOI LIFE, IT IS AN INFERNO *WELL FIRED.*

I MUST *SAY,* I'D *HEARD* THE RETINUE OF THE STAR-LORD WAS *MOTLEY,* BUT I'D NOT EXPECTED YOUR VALET TO BE A *PUNGENT SAVAGE.*

WHAT KIND OF SPARTOI REFRESHMENTS CAN HE MAKE WITH THOSE CRUDE KNIVES, PRINCE PETER?

THAT IS A PROMISE.

YOU WILL SEE WHAT I CAN DO WITH THESE KNIVES, YOU AWFUL CHILD.

YOU HAVE FAR MORE WEAPONS THAN HUNTERS.

WELL, SURPLUS *IS* A SURE MARK OF *CIVILIZATION.*

YET STILL, YOU HAVE NOT BROUGHT ENOUGH.

NO HUNT HAS EVER DEPLETED EVEN A *THIRD* OF ITS AMMUNITION.

THE WILDERNESS DOES NOT CARE.

MY PRINCE. YOUR REGALIA AWAITS.

NO. ABSOLUTELY NOT. ME AND MINE ARE DONE WITH ALL THAT.

BUT...ROYAL ONE, THE MAJOR ARCANA...

DRONE.

LEAVE THE EARTHEN PRINCE BE.

IF HE WISHES TO FORGO THE CEREMONIAL HUNTSMAN'S CAP, WE SHALL SIMPLY MARK THIS HUNT AS *CURSED* AND SURELY THE START OF OUR EMPIRE'S PRECIPITOUS DECLINE.

Peter, don't %&$# this up.

YEE-#&%@ING-HAW.

IT SEEMS LIKE THE NATIVES HAVE LET THEIR GARDENS RUN A BIT RIOT, *EH, HM?*

THEY WEREN'T ***NATIVES.***

THEY WERE ***COLONISTS.*** MANIFOLD TERRITORIES HAVE GOT NO NATIVE LIFE--THIS PLACE WAS SETTLED BY ***HOMESTEADERS.*** THEY CALLED THIS PLANET ***RA'THALAMZI.***

RA'THALAMZI? MORE LIKE, ***RA'THAL-ME-UP*** A REFRESHING AETHER TEA, CHOP-CHOP!

THIS IS WHY I'M OUT HERE, CAPTAIN SAGITTAR. FOREST MIGHT BE PRETTY, BUT IT AIN'T NATURAL. PLANET GOT HIT BY SOMETHING CALLED--

"GROOTFALL."

OH, WE KNOW ALL ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT LITTLE EMBARRASSMENT WITH THE PROSCENIUM A YEAR AGO.

A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THAT WHICH I BELIEVE TO THE CORE OF MY GILDED SELF: "SPARTOI ARE BEST WITH SPARTOI."

WHEN WE GO ***MIXING,*** IT JUST LEADS TO ***TROUBLE.***

PETER QUILL! YOUR HOMETOWN FRIENDS ARE EMBARRASSING AND PATHETIC.

THEY ARE ALSO DRESSED LIKE ***OOLIAN DANCE NUNS*** AND HAVE THE DECAYING MINDS OF ***BIGOTS--***

TO ARMS!

A HUNTING BEAST EMERGES!

PATHETIC, ARE WE?

MY LORDS.

LET US SHOW THIS SAVAGE THE POWER OF THE SUN.

WELL SHOT! A *CLEAR THREAT,* HANDLED CRISPLY!

THESE BEASTS WILL ADD A FULL SHELF OF TROPHIES TO MY GAME ROOM!

IF WE KEEP THIS UP, WE'LL BEAT MY GRANDFATHER'S RECORD FOR *SURE!*

...THIS ISN'T RIGHT.

I AGREE. I ALONE HOLD SEVENTEEN MEDALS OF SPARTOI VALOR! A PARTY UNDER MY COMMAND SHOULD BE COLLECTING GAME AT A *MUCH FASTER RATE.*

NOT THE POINT. THERE SHOULDN'T BE *GAME* HERE *AT ALL.* THIS WORLD GOT HIT. *NOTHING* SURVIVES GROOTFALL.

ADAPTATION IS A *KIND OF* DEATH, OH BROTHER TO MY QUEEN.

OF COURSE, DEATH ITSELF IS *ALWAYS PREFERABLE.*

A TRUE BEAUTY!

HA HAH!

THIS IS NO HUNT. THIS IS... BUTCHERY.

EVERYTHING IS A HUNT. YOU SEE WHAT YOU WANT. YOU GO AFTER IT. YOU TAKE IT. IT'S YOURS.

WHAT YOU ARE DESCRIBING IS *THEFT.*

AUGUST AND INCREDIBLE MASTERS, I HAVE LOCATED A SUMPTUOUS TARGET. A BEAST OF **UNUSUAL SIZE.**

PREDATORY?

UNKNOWN, ILLUSTRIOUS CAPTAIN...

...BUT IT IS CERTAINLY A PRIZE.

BEAUTIFUL.

SHE WILL BE *OURS.*

'FRAID I CAN'T LET YOU DO THAT, SAGITTAR.

BY THE GREAT CRAB! WHAT BETRAYAL IS *THIS?!*

YOU JUST ENTERED GUARDIANS JURISDICTION, FRIEND. GROOTFALL'S A WILD PHENOMENON WE BARELY UNDERSTAND, AND IT HASN'T LEFT SOMEONE ALIVE *YET.*

ME AND MINE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THIS FOR A DAMN YEAR. AND WE'VE *NEVER* SEEN A PLACE LIKE THIS.

SO *HOLD BACK.* LET ME TRY TO TALK TO IT. MAYBE WE CAN FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHY--

"TALK"?

WITH A *FLORA COLOSSUS?*

AYE. YER A *MASCOT,* EARTHBLOOD.

OUR GLORIOUS HAUL AWAITS. SO REMOVE THAT BARREL FROM MY SIGHT, OR CONSIGN YOURSELF TO BECOMING OUR PRIZE *YOURSELF.*

PETER QUILL!

GO *NOW!*

YOU CONFUSE YOUR HUNT REGALIA FOR YOUR ANTLERS OF OFFICE. YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS A *CEREMONIAL COURTESY--*

--YOU HAVE NO ACTUAL AUTHORITY OVER THE GILDED HUNT, AND YOUR PEASHOOTER WILL NOT HALT OUR GLORIOUS CHARGE.

I WILL TEACH THESE HILARIOUS IDIOTS THE MEANING OF GLORY! AND I WILL NEED NO GUN!

ONLY THE MUSIC OF MY *BLADES.*

KRAKOOM

DRAX

SORRY, VICTORIA.

YOU *DARE* LAY YOUR *FILTHY BLADE* ON A *TRUE MAN OF SPARTAX?!*

THE GALL!

OKAY.

OKAY.

ONE SHOT, PETE. ALL YOU GOT. ALL YOU NEED.

PETER QUILL! YOU MISTAKE YOURSELF, SIR! IF THIS IS HOW YOU SEEK TO CONDUCT YOURSELF...

...THEN THE VERY BASIS OF YOUR LIFE IS WRONG!!!

COME ON, GROOT.

YOU'RE UP TO SOMETHING HERE.

HELP ME UNDERST--

→*←

PETER QUILL.

YOU ARE GROOT.

GROOT. CAN YOU HEAR ME?

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING?

YOU ARE GROOT.

NO. I'M YOUR *FRIEND.*

I'M ONE OF THE LAST PEOPLE IN THIS *ENTIRE GALAXY* WHO BELIEVES YOU'RE STILL *IN THERE* SOMEWHERE.

BUT I HAVE TO UNDERSTAND *WHY* YOU'RE DOING THIS.

I AM *GROOT.*

THAT'S NOT AN *ANSWER!* SPEAK *PLAIN!* I'M IN YOUR MIND--OR YOU'RE IN MINE--THIS ISN'T A TIME FOR LANGUAGE BARRIERS, MAN!

YOU ARE *KILLING* PEOPLE. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? YOU KILLED OUR *FRIENDS.*

YOU'RE KILLING *ME.* RIGHT *NOW.*

NOW...

...NOW IS GROOT.

THEN WAS ALONE.

ROCKET KNOWS. ROCKET SAW.

ROCKET? WE CAN BRING YOU TO ROCKET!

WE CAN FIND A WAY TO REVERSE THIS! WE CAN MAKE THINGS *RIGHT!*

THINGS *ARE* RIGHT, FRIEND PETER.

ALL IS GROOT.

SMEK

NOT DEAD.

BLOSSOMED.

MY FRIEND. BRING *ROCKET.* I WOULD SHOW YOU ALL.

I WOULD EMBRACE YOU AGAIN.

WE WOULD BE FAMILY.

BUT NOT THIS ONE. IT IS TOO LATE FOR THIS ONE.

NO!

CLICK

YES.

KRAKKEN

HUZZAH

HUZZAH!

WHAT A *SHOT*, CAPTAIN! LIKE THE ARROW OF ORION!

LET IT *NEVER* BE SAID THAT *SPARTAX* HOLDS BACK HER DOMINION FROM MAN OR BEAST, *REGARDLESS* OF THE SIZE!

NOW TO *CAMP* WITH US! WE'LL MAKE FOR HOME WITH TROPHY AND TALE!

YOU'LL TELL YOUR *CHILDREN* ABOUT THIS DAY! AND THEY TOO WILL KNOW THE CERTAINTY OF THE *UNENDING DOMINION* OF THE *ASTROLOGERS OF SPARTAX!*

WHY, WHO CAN SAY? PERHAPS EVEN THE NEXT *MASTER OF THE SUN* STANDS AMONG OUR NUMBER? FOR SURELY, THE STAIN OF *EARTHBLOOD* WILL SOON FADE FROM OUR HISTORY...

...AND WE SHALL BE THE FUTURE OF SPARTAX!

"WELL.

"THAT WAS QUICK."

NOT THE FIRST TIME PETER'S HEARD THAT.

THE HELL DID THEY DO TO THE PLANET DOWN THERE? THE PROBABILITY OF A LIVABLE ATMOSPHERE IS PLUMMETING BY THE MINUTE.

THE PLANET WAS A GROOT. THEY KILLED IT.

DAMN. THEY SHOULD GIVE US SOME POINTERS.

GAMORA.

OPEN THE CARGO BAY.

NOW.

"DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE BASIS FOR YOUR LIFE IS WRONG?"

YEAH, MOTHER- $&%#$.

I REALLY DO.

NICE SHOT.

THANKS, GAMORA.

WANT A DRINK? IT'S TERRIBLE.

GOOD. SO AM I.

HEY. DON'T DO THAT TO YOURSELF.

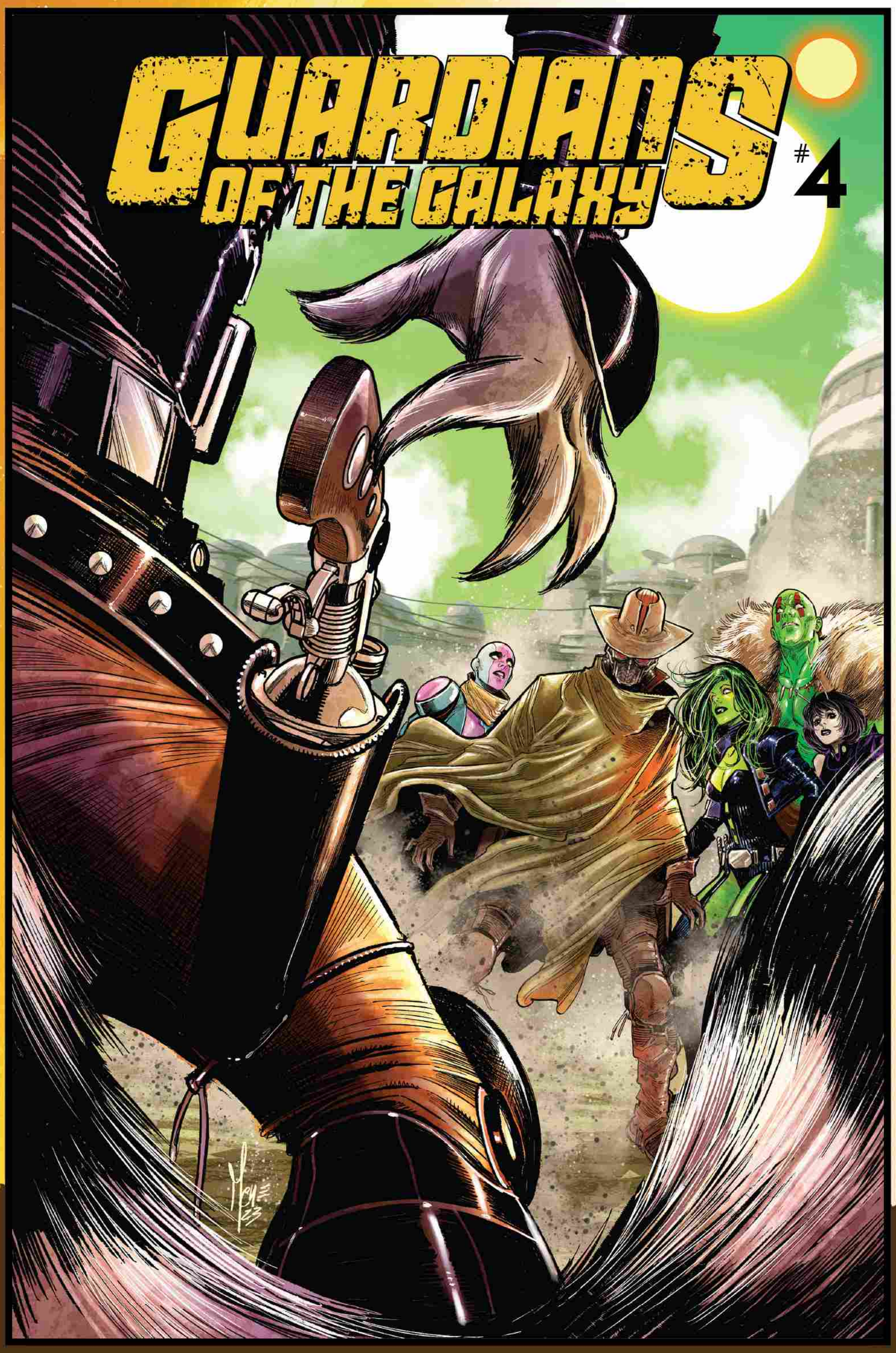
TAKE IT FROM ME, PETER. YOU'RE NOT WHERE YOU COME FROM.

NOT IF YOU BURN IT DOWN.

NEXT:
ENTER THE
STAR-SHERIFF

NEXT: THE STAR-SHERIFF

Rocket Raccoon is back...and he's not happy to see the Guardians of the Galaxy!
Where has he been all this time? What's happened to him?
Get ready for a Rocket Raccoon you've never seen before!



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ZONE